

Philistine Religion

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Evidence for religious praxis in the Philistine culture of the Iron Age Southern Levant, based on archaeological finds, and some information from biblical literature and ancient near eastern texts. The Philistine culture appeared in the southern Coastal Plain ("Philistia") of the southern Levant (modern Israel/Palestine) ca. 1200 BCE during the transition between the Late Bronze and Iron Ages. This culture is a combination of migrants from various regions in the eastern Mediterranean (with significant Aegean components), of various socio-economic backgrounds (including perhaps pirate groups), who settled in the Philistia alongside local Canaanites. Together, they formed a unique "entangled" culture, which combined attributes of various origins. This culture continued to exist in the region until ca. 600, when the last Philistine cities were destroyed by the Babylonians. The Philistine culture is well-known from excavations in the last century, at major cities such as Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gath, and smaller sites such as Nahal Patish, Tel Qasile and Tel Yavneh. Important finds relation to cultic practices have been found at these sites, including public temples (Ekron, Gath, Patish and Qasile), domestic cult (Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and Gath), and cultic repositories of various types (Gath, Qasile and Yavneh). The Philistine culture was not rich in written materials, and the small corpus of inscriptions from the Iron Age II (ca. 1000-600) is written in an alphabetic script, using a language similar to Phoenician, and contains minimal information on Philistine religion, including a few names of deities (e.g. Patgaiah, Baal), but very little other information. The Philistines are mentioned often in the Bible as neighbors and enemies of the Israelites, often in a negative manner. While the biblical texts may have been written, for the most part, later than the events they depict, they nevertheless seem to mirror the complex relationships that existed between the Israelites and the Philistines during the Iron Age.

Date Range: 1200 BCE - 600 BCE

Region: Philistia

Region tags: Middle East, Eastern Mediterranean, Palestine, Israel

The region in which the Philistine culture was centered during the Iron Age (ca. 1200-600 BCE), also known as the southern Coastal Plain of Palestine/Israel.

Status of Participants:

✓ Elite ✓ Religious Specialists ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

- Source 1: Dothan, T. 1982. *The Philistines and Their Material Culture*. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society.
- Source 2: Yasur-Landau, A. 2010. *The Philistines and Aegean Migration at the End of the Late Bronze Age*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Source 3: Ben-Shlomo, D. 2010. *Philistine Iconography: A Wealth of Style and Symbolism*. *Orbis Biblicus*

et Orientalis 241. Fribourg: Fribourg Academic Press.

Online sources for understanding this subject:

– Source 1 URL: gath.wordpress.com

– Source 1 Description: Webpage of the Tell es-Safi/Gath Archaeological Project, excavations at one of the major sites of the Philistines

General Variables

Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes



Is the cultural contact competitive:

– Yes

Does the religious group have a general process/system for assigning religious affiliation:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religion have official political support

– Field doesn't know

Is there a conception of apostasy in the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (% of sample region population, numerical):

– Field doesn't know

Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also “oral scriptures” (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– Field doesn't know

Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– Yes

↳ In the average settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Size of largest single religious monument, square meters:

– Square meters: 2400

↳ Height of largest single religious monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Size of average monument, square meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Height of average monument, meters:

– Field doesn't know

↳ In the largest settlement, what percentage of area is taken up by all religious monuments:

– Field doesn't know

Are there different types of religious monumental architecture:

– Yes

↳ Tombs:

– Yes

↳ Cemeteries:

– Yes

↳ Temples:

– Yes

↳ Altars:

– Yes

↳ Devotional markers:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Mass gathering point [plazas, courtyard, square. Places permanently demarcated using visible objects or structures]:

– Field doesn't know

Is iconography present:

– Yes

↳ Where is iconography present [select all that apply]:

– On persons

– At home

– Only religious public space

– Some public spaces

↳ Are there distinct features in the religious group's iconography:

– Yes

↳ Eyes (stylized or not):

– No

↳ Supernatural beings (zoomorphic):

– Yes

↳ Supernatural beings (geomorphic):

– Field doesn't know

- ↳ Supernatural beings (anthropomorphic):
 - Yes
- ↳ Supernatural beings (abstract symbol):
 - Yes
- ↳ Portrayals of afterlife:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Aspects of doctrine (e.g. cross, trinity, Mithraic symbols):
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Humans:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Other features of iconography:
 - Yes

Are there specific sites dedicated to sacred practice or considered sacred:

– Field doesn't know

Are pilgrimages present:

– Field doesn't know

Beliefs

Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer “no” only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Field doesn't know

Belief in afterlife:

– Field doesn't know

Reincarnation in this world:

– Field doesn't know

Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Field doesn't know

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– Yes

↳ Human sacrifices present:

– No

↳ Animal co-sacrifices present:

– Yes

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

↳ Valuable items:

– Yes

↳ Significant wealth (e.g. gold, jade, intensely worked objects):

– Yes

↳ Some wealth (some valuable or useful objects interred):

– Yes

↳ Other valuable/precious items interred:

– No

↳ Other grave goods:

– Yes

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

↳ As cenotaphs:

– No

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– Yes

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– Yes

↳ Other formal burial type:

– Yes [specify]: cremation burials

Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: As at least two names of Philistine deities are mentioned in Philistine inscriptions (Patgaiah, Baal, Ab, Rapa) and in the Bible as well (Dagon, Baal), this indicates that there were supernatural beings in Philistine religion. Much though is not known on their character, save for that they are both female (Patgaiah) and male.

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Field doesn't know

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: There are gods of various kinds and names, mentioned in inscriptions and biblical texts

- ↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Organized hierarchically:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Power of beings is domain specific:
 - Field doesn't know
- ↳ Other organization for pantheon:
 - Field doesn't know

Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Field doesn't know

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Field doesn't know

Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– Field doesn't know

Norms and Moral Realism

Are general social norms prescribed by the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Is there a conventional vs. moral distinction in the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Practices

Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require celibacy (full sexual abstinence):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require constraints on sexual activity (partial sexual abstinence):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require permanent scarring or painful bodily alterations:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require painful physical positions or transitory painful wounds:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of property/valuable items:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require physical risk taking:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require accepting ethical precepts:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require marginalization by out-group members:

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require participation in small-scale rituals (private, household):

– Field doesn't know

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

I.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Field doesn't know

Are extra-ritual in-group markers present:

E.g. special changes to appearance such as circumcision, tattoos, scarification, etc.

– Field doesn't know

Does the group employ fictive kinship terminology:

– Field doesn't know

Society and Institutions

Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– Other [specify in comments]

Notes: Probably a group of small city states

Welfare

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized famine relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is famine relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized poverty relief:

– Field doesn't know

Is poverty relief available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm:

– Field doesn't know

Is institutionalized care for the elderly and infirm available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Education

Does the religious group provide formal education to its adherents:

– Field doesn't know

Is formal education available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group:

– Field doesn't know

Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with a formal bureaucracy within their group:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Field doesn't know

Public Works

Does the religious group in question provide public food storage:

– Field doesn't know

Is public food storage provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide water management (irrigation, flood control):

– Field doesn't know

Is water management provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide transportation infrastructure:

– Field doesn't know

Is transportation infrastructure provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Taxation

Does the religious group in question levy taxes or tithes:

– Field doesn't know

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized police force provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents interact with an institutionalized judicial system provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question enforce institutionalized punishment:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to institutionalized punishment enforced by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Does the religious group in question have a formal legal code:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents subject to a formal legal code provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Warfare

Does religious group in question possess an institutionalized military:

– Field doesn't know

Do the group's adherents participate in an institutionalized military provided by institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Are the group's adherents protected by or subject to an institutionalized military provided by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Written Language

Does the religious group in question possess its own distinct written language:

– No

Notes: They use an alphabetic writing system similar to the Phoenician alphabet

Is a non-religion-specific written language available to the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Is a non-religion-specific written language used by the group's adherents through an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Field doesn't know

Is a formal calendar provided for the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Field doesn't know

Is food provided to the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Field doesn't know

Bibliography

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